

Prenatal Yoga: For Expectant Mothers

Yoga is extremely popular for its awesome restorative and rehabilitative qualities. Therefore, it is a perfect exercise expectant mothers can take. The beauty of yoga is that while you can undoubtedly take yoga classes at a studio or gym, it's ideal in your living room too! It's a low-impact, stress-free form of exercise everyone can do.

Mothers who regularly exercised or focused on their personal fitness often remark that one of the greatest psychological changes they experience during pregnancy is the loss of the outlet exercise afforded them. Yoga is the perfect solution for mothers who crave that outlet of physical and mental exertion. Yoga can also be calming and, as mentioned restorative, making it ideal for mother and child to experience.

In this blog, we will further explore some of the benefits yoga for prenatal mothers has, as well as some of the most popular poses and workouts they can do.

What are the benefits of prenatal yoga?

Typically, the benefits of prenatal yoga are much the same as yoga for everyone else. Expectant mothers can expect better quality sleep, less stress and anxiety, improved strength, and tension relief in parts of the body under strain due to pregnancy and a reduction in common pregnancy side effects like nausea, headaches, and shortness of breath.

The sense of community prenatal yoga classes give is also a key benefit. Not only will you learn what you can do from the comfort of your home, there's nothing better than having a laugh and chat with other expectant mothers during and after class.

What types of yoga are not recommended for prenatal mothers?

As yoga enthusiasts will tell you, there is no one yoga per se. Instead, you can do a series of styles and disciplines, each opening and focusing on certain parts of the body, varying in intensity and difficulty as well as environments. Finding or choosing a class for a particular day is half the fun with yoga!

Bikram yoga requires a hot environment and is not considered safe for expectant mothers. Any yoga style where the environment's temperature is elevated should be avoided, in fact.

Poses that involve laying flat on your back or excessive abdominal stretching should also be avoided. In addition, some women who have been advised that they may experience premature labor should avoid all yoga. A general rule of thumb though, is to not exert yourself and try to keep your routine to 30 minutes or so.

What do I need to know before starting?

As with introducing anything new into your routine while pregnant, it's essential to ensure you consult with your healthcare provider first. Certain medical conditions may be exacerbated by any stress and strain you put on your body during yoga while pregnant. Remember, your body is already under a lot of strain, so anything that disrupts that balance could jeopardize your or your baby's health. Heart disease

and back problems are typical barriers to doing prenatal yoga, so if you have any of these, consult with your physician first, no matter how 'light' the yoga session will be.

Remember to start off slow with your yoga. By pacing yourself, you will learn where your limits are. Your body is different now, so what you may have been capable of pre-pregnancy is likely not going to happen now.

Hydration and staying cool will be of paramount importance too. Because of this, Bikram yoga is not recommended.

Whilst yoga does focus on total body mobility, the fact is there are many poses that will place strain and stress on you and your baby. Maintaining correct spinal curvature is crucial, and any poses that involve laying on the back or stomach must be avoided. Poses that involve moving out of your regular plane of movement and twists can be very dangerous too, especially around the abdomen area. Always consider what is happening where the baby is and the stress on your back whilst doing prenatal yoga.

5 Poses that are great to learn for prenatal mothers.

1. Cat/Cow Pose

This famous pose is excellent for easing back pain. In a tabletop position (on all fours), place your knees under your hips and your hands in line with your shoulders. Slowly ease between arching your back to the sky, then down toward the floor. The arching of your back upwards is cat-like, then the downwards motion mimics a cow mooing at the moon. Your lower back should loosen in this pose and the shifting of pressure to your knees and wrists will provide further relief. Breathing in on the way up and out when you go down opens your chest and relaxes the body.

2. Tabletop Pose

This is set up like the start of your cat/cow pose. However, instead of moving your spine up and down, you'll focus on balance. In contrast, you alternate between stretching one arm and the opposite leg. This pose is vital for tightening your abdominal muscles and core which will be under tremendous strain during labor.

3. Downward Facing Dog Pose

This pose is one you'll likely recognize. You'll create an inverted V-shape with your body to open your hips, shoulders, and lower back. You can also do this pose with the use of a wall, instead of having your hands on the floor.

4. Bound Angle Pose

This position encourages good posture which helps in so many ways whilst pregnant. It also focuses on better breathing and calms the body. Sit on the floor with your feet together. You can place your hands around your feet. Feel your groin area open and enjoy this easy meditative pose. You may want to massage your feet and calves for even more relaxation.

5. Squatting Poses

A wide-legged squat stance is a simple pose that you can pulse/or hover between to mimic childbirth and strengthen your legs and pelvic floor. If you are worried about your balance in this pose, rest your back against a wall and use it for support.

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